DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 111 209 FL 007 076

AUTHOR Hoffer, Bates
TITLE Towards Implicational Scales for Use in Chicano English Composition. Papers in Southwest English 1: Research Techniques and Prospects.
INSTITUTION Trinity Univ., San Antonio, Tex.
PUB DATE 75
NOTE 14p.
AVAILABLE FROM Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas 78284 ($2.00)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Composition Skills (Literary); *Contrastive Linguistics; Dialect Studies; *English (Second Language); Error Patterns; Grammar; *Interference (Language Learning); Language Learning Levels; Language Variation; Mexican Americans; Nonstandard Dialects; *Second Language Learning; Spanish Speaking; Standard Spoken Usage
IDENTIFIERS *Error Analysis; Southwest English

ABSTRACT

Dialect analysis should follow the procedure for analysis of a new language: collection of a corpus of words, stories, and sentences and identifying structural features of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon. Contrastive analysis between standard English and the native language is used and the ethnic dialect of English is described and compared with standard English. Variation study of the Mexican-American dialect is important to identify grammatical errors that can be corrected. Constrastive analysis explains and predicts first-language interference from maximal to minimal as the second language is learned. Error analysis compiles deviations caused by language interference, dialect differences, lack of knowledge of grammar, etc., and provides a teaching tool. Language acquisition and probably second language learning follows set stages and the types of errors appropriate to each stage are in a well-defined series. The notion of irreversible solidarity states that when E3, E2, and E1 are grammar rules of descending difficulty, if E3 is learned and used correctly by an individual, then E2 and E1 will be also. The rules are learned in order from simple to complex. Knowledge and understanding of language acquisition and error patterns are powerful diagnostic tools for the teacher of English. (CHK)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED111209

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY John D. Brantley, Dept. of English, Trinity Univ. TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

TOWARDS IMPLICATIONAL SCALES FOR USE IN CHICANO ENGLISH COMPOSITION

Bates Hoffer
Trinity University

Analysis. In beginning the linguistic analysis of a new language, linguists follow the same general pattern of field methods (see Gleason 1962). A large corpus of words, stories, phrases, sentences, and so on is collected in as much phonetic detail as appropriate to the situation. On the basis of this corpus, usually together with a native speaker to provide further data, the linguist groups the nonsignificant variations into the structurally significant features which compose the interrelated language structures of phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon. For many reasons the same field method approach should be used in the study of dialects within a major language: it treats each language structure in its own terms; it does not treat the dialect as "substandard" or "nonstandard," either of which is derogatory; it would do more justice to a language variety which may have millions of native speakers. On the other hand, since the analysis of, say, the English language has never been completed (see Hill 1966 for a treatment of the enormity of the problems), it may indeed be foolish to attempt to treat each and every variety of it as if each were a brand new object of study. The sheer magnitude of the problem precludes a pure field methods approach. But, as we shall see below, that is no reason to rule out the use of particular types of raw linguistic data elicitation.

A second approach to the study of a major ethnic dialect is contrastive analysis, in which the various language structures of English

FL007076

and the native language of the ethnic group are set side by side and the differences marked as potential difficulty points (see the Center for Applied Linguistics series of contrastive analyses). For example, in the high front vowel range English has [i] as in "beat" and [I] as in "bit," but Spanish, Japanese, and many more languages have only [i] in that range. Thus, in the case of maximal contrast, speakers of the latter use only [i] in English, such that [šip] "sheep" and [šIp] "ship" both are produced as [šip]. The value of contrastive analysis in ethnic dialect may lie in this, that maximal contrast in most areas of language structure defines a major dialect. To give an example, in San Antonio there are several thousands of Mexican American speakers of English whose English dialect is similar in most respects to the language structures predicted by a rather mechanical application of contrastive analysis.

Generally the approach toward a description of an ethnic dialect is based on the "known" factor; that is, it is based on a standard variety of English where "standard" refers to a generally agreed-upon language description. (Before anyone begins screaming that the notion "standard" suggests superiority, let me remind you that James Sledd has noted several times these past several years that the major language structures of English have changed very little in the last three centuries. Sledd in fact made this comment at the South Central American Dialect Society meeting in 1972. I assume that the inference we should at this point draw from his remark is that, if we feel compelled to rail against a "standard," we had best go back to school and take a good course on the history of the English language.) Once we have agreed upon a standard, we can describe a dialect by noting its variations from the standard. In my

classes, we call the standard "Cronkite-ese," which reflects the fact that we are dealing with a highly edited, rather formal style of English which is basically Midwestern in its pronunciation. The fact that not one of us in my courses would use exclusively that variety of English in any conversation is of no moment. The necessary starting point is the choice of standard so that work can begin. Logically, I suppose, we could choose Gunsmoke's Festus as representative of "standard." We choose Cronkite-ese simply because it enables us to communicate easily with the largest number of English speakers. It is well described in prescriptive handbooks and seems to have no particular feature which is repulsive to any segment of the English speaking world.

All three methods of dealing with dialects are necessary for a full treatment. Field methods must be used to double check any other results. Contrastive analysis supplies the linguistic explanation for many of the basic structural differences. Error analysis or deviation study must be done in order to catch any major features overlooked during the analysis. The general scheme with respect to the Mexican American English corpus of written English of the University of Texas at El Paso, collected by Jacob Ornstein and his associates, is as follows: the corpus collection is itself a basic step in field methods; contrastive analysis explains some of the structurally different aspects of the English contained therein; a variation study is in order so that the structural differences defined as part of the Mexican American dialect can be separated from those differences which are idiosyncratic and therefore defined as grammatical errors which the writer should correct in order to communicate more easily and effectively with the greatest number of English speakers. After all, easy and accurate communication is a primary goal of language study.

Language Interference. Contrastive analysis of two language systems predicts a continuum of language varieties between the two systems. Maximal interference occurs when all the native language structures are transferred and used as if they were the structures of the target language. From that system of hundreds of interference points there is a continuum of fewer and fewer interferences until minimal interference is reached, which usually involves the single feature that the speaker's intonation system shifts back to the native system in times of stress or emotion. We have an example of this on our tape collection at Trinity. When the taping session was seemingly over, the informant used her first interference feature in a statement such as: "It was so hard!" The intonation features of "hard" were uniquely Mexican American and have been so identified by dozens of independent listeners. For reasons which will be important below, it must be noted here that intonation as the last interference problem to be overcome is implied in Jakobson's work in language acquisition (1968), wherein intonation features are one of the first language structures learned by a baby and the last lost in aphasia. Yet, the maximal to minimal continuum of language interference cannot be used to define dialect varieties lest (by the way, when is the last time you read "lest" in a linguistics paper?) we find ourselves with literally hundreds of dialects. To put the matter the other way around, contrastive analysis is a useful tool but by no means the only tool we have. In approaching a corpus, then, we expect contrastive analysis to explain some of what we find; it would be galloping senility to expect more.

Just one brief point should be added here as evidence of the validity of contrastive analysis. I have taught the subject to language

teachers at Hawaii, Cornell, and Trinity. Each time I tell them to bring their text; we then analyze the underlying sequence of introduction to phonology and grammar. Then, based on the difference between the book and the predictions based on the course, I list for them the points at which their students have difficulty in class. Because the list is so close to their experience, they seem to conclude that ESP is used or that I have secretly conferred with their students. Contrastive analysis, properly done and properly understood, is a powerful tool for textbook analysis.

Error analysis compiles the deviations from an agreed-upon norm. As all of us know who have begun such tasks, error analysis includes deviations caused by a variety of things, for example:

(1) language interference
(2) dialect differences
(3) lack of control of a grammatical rule (i.e., writer at an earlier stage of acquisition)
(4) taught incorrectly by teacher
(5) misspellings
(6) other types of "temporary" deviations
(7) and so on and so on

Now where, as in 1 or 2, the deviations are structured by language or dialect interference, then the results of the analysis are useful in the general pedagogical situation. In this case the interference should converge with that predicted by contrastive analysis. The error analysis is of great benefit where the textbook contains or has caused certain deviations. The benefit is twofold: first, the text can be amended; second, the student can learn the correct forms. Usually, however, the deviations of school age writers include all the types of errors listed above. Perhaps the most important type is neither language interference nor dialect difference but sheer lack of control of a grammar rule. We as teachers need to know if a

student has acquired the necessary set of grammar devices so that he can comprehend English. In other words, our first priority is to overcome systematic problems for the class as a whole. We can handle individual problem points in the appropriate manner.

One major point to be made here is that often a written corpus is one in which all the students have avoided complicated constructions and we find evidence of their competence in many simple constructions. However, we find no evidence of their control of complicated ones. Sometimes, then, a corpus gives us no clear picture of their entire syntactic competence.

The schema of first language acquisition given to us by Jakobson (1968) and later workers is one of a biologically-based, human-universal acquisition by "preprogrammed" stages. General intonation features are learned first, bilabial consonants before others, /a/ learned as first vowel because it is most open, /w, r, l/ distinguished one from another, in all contexts, learned very late in English acquisition. Were this schema only based on observation and synthesis, it would be important. Yet two other arguments support it. In general aphasia, minimal language loss involves only /w, r, l/ or whatever was learned last, while maximal loss leaves only intonation as a superfix over undifferentiated sound without even a structured consonant/vowel distinction. The second argument is that a typology of human language systems, such as Hockett's (1955), can be organized along the same dimensions used by Jakobson. In other words, human language systems are cut to the same general pattern (see Greenberg 1966:xv) as is the acquisition schema. There is a critically important principle which Jakobson defined in this schema. That principle is "irreversible solidarity" in which (see Bach 1967 and Fillmore 1968) a

feature cannot be acquired unless certain features before it in the schema have been acquired. A simple example is /č/ in English, which cannot be mastered until /t/ and /š/ are mastered. The critically important part for our purposes here is that the statements can be turned around. To wit (another good ole phrase resurrected herein), if /č/ is correct in all contexts, then /t/ and /š/ have been mastered. This principle, then, becomes an excellent diagnostic tool for assessing progress in language development. The two major points in this paragraph are that we have a diagnostic tool in language acquisition and that the stages of acquisition and consequently the type of errors appropriate to each stage are in a well-defined series. If--of course it is a big "if"--it can be demonstrated that second language or second dialect acquisition follows the fundamental principles of Jakobson's full treatment, we will have an excellent set of tools in teaching these or doing research in this area.

A reading of a corpus such as the UTEP one certainly suggests that there is indeed in second language learning the "irreversible solidarity" principle. In general terms--since this talk is too long, anyhow--we can thus predict from certain errors in individual papers the other systematic errors that occur. These predictions would not hold true unless a relatively well-defined sequence of acquisition exists. The "irreversible solidarity" works like this: assume that E_3 E_2 E_1 illustrates three grammar rules of one series that increases in difficulty. If we find E_3 used incorrectly in a paper, we predict that E_2 and E_1 will also be wrong or that the student will have avoided those constructions, as noted earlier. An error in E_2 implies a problem with E_1 but implies nothing about E_3. You will see in the next section that evidence for such sequences involving growing linguistic complexity does exist in UTEP corpus.

Now let me try to tell exactly why this long section on language acquisition was stuck in here. The reason is simply that if we can show that the second language acquisition schema follows a general sequence between maximal contrast to minimal contrast AND that ethnic dialects in general correspond to one structural state between maximal and minimal contrast, then we have an extremely powerful diagnostic tool. Once we have this acquisition schema better delineated, we can spend our linguistic observation time looking for the maximal interference errors--or "difference," if you prefer--and predict the rest of the dialect system from those. In the pedagogical situation--and that is what we are ultimately after--the teacher will know not only the obvious current errors but what kinds of errors should come next as evidence of normal progress. To use one of the silliest analogies as yet used in the history of linguistics, consider the sequenced error schema in bowling: first you must figure out which fingers to stick in the ball, then how to swing it without endangering self or others, then how to roll it between the gutters, and finally you can worry about knocking down the bowling pins.

Error analysis of part of UTEP corpus. There are a wide variety of materials available on contrastive analysis as well as the specifics of Spanish-English contrast. The CAL series has already been mentioned. George's (1972) general treatment of error analysis is also recommended.

Let us continue this section by noting that we can treat errors of omission as well as commission. Errors of omission include: (1) the restriction of verbs to "is, have, go" in the entire written production for the course; (2) the complete absence of any complex sentences, limiting the sentence structures to S (sentence), S and S, S and S and S, etc.;

(3) an average of less than one relative clause modifier per essay. None of these "errors" requires correction, but the student ought to be encouraged to try harder. After all, if the student is writing at a lower level of linguistic complexity than his speech exhibited at age three, he may be judged mentally inferior based on his written production.

In this presentation, only six types of errors found in the corpus material will be treated. The first three are errors associated with a rather poor command of English. The last three compose a sequence of increasing complexity.

(1) Grammatical prepositions. These lexical items are learned one by one. Sometimes Spanish and English prepositions are close equivalents, but other times no.

Examples: "is different of Mexico." (should be "from)
"I don't care for the color." (where the context shows that "about" is the intended meaning.)

This error always occurs with other types because it represents a poor command of English.

(2) Grammatical order. Spanish can reorder the subject after the verb much more freely than English, and Spanish can omit an overt subject while English cannot.

Examples: "Goes the class to the library . . . ." (wrong order)
"Then goes to the library." (subject omitted)

This type of error always occurs with other types because it is characteristic of a poor command of English.

(3) Syntactic agreement. There are a whole set of problems involving the way in which phrases fit together grammatically. A general term might be "agreement."

Examples: "The people is . . . ." (probably because "gente" is singular in Spanish)
"He went . . . then he goes . . . ." (Sequence of tenses is a problem in any language, of course.)
"I said him . . . ." (verbs such as speak, say, tell, ask, call have special rules and cause persistent trouble because none precisely matches the Spanish decir, preguntar, etc.)

These errors are not merely products of Spanish-English contrast, because in most cases the student made similar errors in the Spanish version of the essay. These errors indicate a stage of acquisition of written language perhaps characteristic of junior high and early high school.

(4) Have/be syntactic rules. These fairly complicated rules have been analyzed by Bach (1967) and Fillmore (1968), among others. Most languages then have idiosyncratic rules which cause learning difficulties. Below, the first two are acceptable, but the third is not. All three structures occur in the corpus.

Examples: "El Paso has many stores."
"Many stores are in El Paso."
*"In El Paso are many stores." (The problem may involve learning "there is/are" for Spanish "hay.")

Errors in these fairly complicated syntactic rules are characteristic of only fair control of English.

(5) "Dummy" verb rules--"do". In English, the dummy verb "do" is used in certain questions and for emphasis as in: "He went"; "Did he go?"; "He did go." Also, "do" can act as a substitute verb: "He went." "What did he do?"

Examples: ". . . do my bed." (for "make my bed"; this is only an error if the student is not using "do" as a substitute.)
". . . did they gone?" (past tense should only be marked on "do".)

Dummy verbs and auxiliary verbs in general are very complicated and cause great difficulty. Often the learner avoids their use when possible.

(6) Embedded clauses. The full set of rules concerning embedded clauses is extremely complicated. For two examples: (a) relative clauses may have different relative pronouns or none at all.

"This is the man who . . . ." or
"This is the man that . . . ."
"This is the book that . . . ." or
"This is the book which . . . ."
"This is the book written by Sam."

(b) Clauses may be objects of certain verbs.

"I believe that it is true."
"I believe it is true."
"I believe that which is true."

The rules governing the use of that, who, which, that which, or their absence are extremely complicated. Two types of examples are given here. Most students seemed to avoid the use of such complications.

Examples: "I respect that is good." (rather than "I respect that which is good." The Spanish version of this paper had "lo que" in a proper Spanish construction.)
"That they died the soldiers." (The Spanish version had "Se mueron los soldades," which contains a reflexive. Apparently the student tried to find an English equivalent for "se," and at least knew enough so that the English was not "The soldiers died themselves.")

At least the last three types of errors seem to be in a general sequence of increasing difficulty. Those students who even tackled embedded clauses had a relatively high level of performance in all other areas of syntax.

Conclusion. The highly selected examples above merely suggest that there is a general learning schema in second language acquisition. In fact, the schema seems to resemble the learning pattern given to us by

Fries (1952:290 ff.) years ago for acquiring "Cronkite-ese." In The structure of English, he treated standard English as an acquired, learned variety of English and as the proper target of English education. Monolingual speakers of English must learn Cronkite-ese, too. Here are a couple of the persistent learning problems for monolinguals: (1) In standard English sentences, the most frequent length is 21 words while for colloquial English it is 11; (2) the most frequent device in nonCronkite-ese for lengthening a sentence is the use of "and," while standard English employs a variety of grammatical devices, such as embedding, as treated above.

The existence of a pattern of acquisition suggests very strongly that we have at our disposal a diagnostic tool which is potentially quite powerful. If we spend the research time to construct the sequence of typical errors appropriate to each stage of acquisition, we have cut the teacher's problem down to manageable proportions. The teacher can keep track of students' progress by noting their sequence of errors. If those errors follow the normal pattern, the teacher knows in general the next type of learning problem. Should the errors deviate from the pattern, then the student requires special care.

The final conclusion of this maundering paper is quite simple. The teacher of standard written English needs to know more than just the target dialect, Cronkite-ese. We must help train these teachers or provide them with the high points, the diagnostic criteria, of the normal language acquisition schema. The last ten years have seen a great interest in the acquisition of syntax. We must enlarge the focus to include its acquisition during the teenage years as the student struggles to learn the highly edited, educated dialect we call standard English.

REFERENCES

Bach, Emmon. 1967. "Have and be in English syntax." Language. 43:462-85.

Fillmore, Charles. 1968. "The case for case." In Emmon Bach and Robert Harms, eds. Universals in linguistic theory. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1-88.

Fries, Charles C. 1952. The structure of English. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

George, H. V. 1972. Common errors in language learning. Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House.

Gleason H. A. 1962. Introduction to descriptive linguistics. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Greenberg, Joseph. 1966. Universals of language. Cambridge, Massachusetts: M. I. T.

Hill, A. A. 1966. "The promises and limitations of the newest type of grammatical analysis." In Lectures in memory of Louise Taft Sample. Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati.

Hockett, Charles. 1955. "A manual of phonology." IJAL. 21 (part 1). No. 4.

Jakobson, Roman. 1968. Child language, aphasia, and phonological universals. The Hague: Mouton.